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AUTHOR Rigby, Avard A.
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ABSTRACT

This speech describes community education, outlines its benefits, and gives a history of its implementation in Utah. According to the author, the community-centered school provides academic and skill development for children, youth, and adults; furnishes supervised recreational and avocational instruction; supplies remedial and supplemental educational needs; furnishes a meeting place for social and civic groups; provides a forum for the discussion of social and other community problems; and provides facilities for the dissemination of medical and social services. (Author/JF)

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STATE LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITY EDUCATION

by Avard A. Rigby

In the foreword to his second annual report on the condition of education in the United States, copies of which have recently been released, U. S. Commissioner of Education S. P. Marland, Jr., stated that "Millions of Americans who not long ago would have been regarded as too young to be 'educated,' or too old or too handicapped or too poor or too isolated are today very much in the center of educational action.

. . . Collectively, it seems fair to say that America has become more deeply engaged than ever before with learning in all forms, to the point in fact where education may very well have become the pre-eminent national concern."

Commissioner Marland stated further that "We now see the need to seek out and strengthen the educational interests of business and industry. We now believe it essential to involve parents and others systematically in educational program and policy development. And most to the point, we are now more than ever determined to help all individuals realize their intellectual rights to the fullest extent, and by means of educational and skill training programs to enhance their prospects for career development."

Without making direct reference to community education, per se, it seems to me that's what Commissioner Marland was talking about and what he was saying has strong implications for the evolving community school movement and for the leadership of State Education Agencies for this program.

As a back drop against which to establish the leadership role of State Education Agencies in Community Education I would like to summarize briefly the views of our Utah delegation concerning this educational concept. These views are not original with us, but are a composite of what we have read, and heard, and observed -- and are a reflection of what we have come to believe.

Community education is a grassroots movement currently revitalizing education throughout the country. More than 600 communities have adopted this program which can benefit a community by revising the American tradition of making the school the center of community activities for all ages. Community education has economic appeal because it stretches the tax dollar by making greater use of school buildings and public facilities.

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Ideally, the community centered school serves the purposes of academic and skill development for children, youth and adults; it furnishes supervised recreational and avocational instruction; it supplies remedial and supplemental educational needs; it furnishes meeting places for social and civic groups; it provides a forum for the discussion of social and other community problems; and it provide facilities for the dissemination of medical and social services.

There are many misconceptions regarding community education. These misconceptions tend to have a common element in that they fail to grasp the totality of the educational enterprise.

One misconception views community education as a new slogan - an "add on," a gimmick devoid of feeling or meaning. Others mistakenly see community education as a neat package of programs. Still other simplistic misconceptions of Community Education are that it is: a lighted school, an extended day program, a series of adult programs, an expanded recreation program, a public relations gimmick, an after-school and a summer enrichment program, a product.

Although all of the above may be elements of a Community Education/ Community School program, they are only components. Community Education is a new concept - a new process involving school and community. This process mobilizes heretofore untapped physical and human resources into new dimensions for education, cultural and social growth and opportunities. All of the above are integral parts of a Community Education program, but more important is the development of a process that make these and other outcomes possible.

My first exposure to the Community Education concept resulted from our State Agency's efforts to find a means of expanding and improving the quality of adult education services within the State. As we were exploring alternative possibilities, we learned about the Flint-Mott Foundation Program of Community Education and arranged for a group of fifty selected education, community, university and civic leaders to travel to Flint, Michigan, for a specially organized Utah Seminar hosted by the Mott Foundation and the Flint Community Education staff. This seminar provided us with an opportunity to observe what was happening in an established program, but it became evident very early that community education was a much broader concept than adult education, per se.

Upon the group's return to Utah, and during follow-up sessions for those who participated in the Flint visitation, it was agreed that there were sufficient values identified with Community Education to merit its' study and consideration for implementation on a State-wide basis. It was at this point in time that, with the encouragement of the fifty participants in the Flint Seminar, the State Board of

Education was contacted through its Administrative staff with the request that the forth-coming annual Spring Administrator's Conference be devoted primarily to an appraisal of the Community Education Concept. Following a period of orientation and study by the State Board of Education and its Administrative staff, which included a viewing of the film "To Touch a Child", the request was granted. As a result, the 1968 State Administrator's Conference, which was attended by approximately 350 school Administrators and an equal number of selected business, community and civic leaders from throughout the State devoted parts of two days studying implications of Community Education for Utah's educational program. Dr. Peter Clancy and Dr. Howard McClusky contributed immeasurably to the success of this conference.

From this beginning, other important events occurred in rapid succession:

* * Brigham Young University was designated as a Regional Training Center for Community Education by the Mott Foundation.

* * The Utah Congress of Parents and Teachers adopted the community school concept as one of its major objectives for 1969, and State Education personnel were granted two hours in each of nine regional P.T.A. Conferences to interpret and promote community education.

* * The State Education Agency developed a position paper on Continuing Education which advocated the use of community schools as the vehicle for achieving these objectives. A series of "Designing Education for the Future" regional conferences sponsored by the State Education Agency during the 1969-70 school year dealt with Community Education and other selected issues.

* * State Education Agency and BYU Regional Center Personnel responded to dozens of requests to participate on programs sponsored by local school districts, civic and service organization, local Parent Teachers Associations, State Legislative Committees and other groups to show the film "To Touch a Child" and to tell the story of Community Education.

* * During 1969 a dynamic full-time State Coordinator of Community Education was employed by the State Board of Education, and the first group of trained Community School Directors and Coordinators began functioning in Utah's local school districts.

* * A second state-wide conference on Community Education was conducted in 1969 under the joint sponsorship of the BYU Regional Training Center, the University of Utah's Division of Continuing Education, and the State Education Agency. More than 300 persons representing a variety of state and local agencies participated in this workshop which provided leadership personnel from successful community education programs in Florida, Michigan, Minneapolis and Utah.

* * During the 1969-70 academic year the State Education Agency appointed and activated a representative "Blue Ribbon" State Advisory Committee for Community Education.

* * During the Spring of 1970 a second representative group of 55 Utahn's visited the Flint, Michigan Community School program under the leadership of Dr. Joseph Nielson, State Community Education Coordinator.

* * The 1970 Utah State Legislature appropriated $200,000 to the State Board of Education for "training, leadership and related costs" in community education. These funds were allocated to local school districts on a program approval basis under Guidelines developed by the State Education Agency. The 1971 Utah Legislature increased the Community Education Appropriation to $250,000. The 1972 Legislature perpetuated the $250,000 appropriation and in addition authorized the establishment and funding of a second full time Community Education position on the State Education Agency Staff effective July 1, 1972.

Admittedly, you have heard only a superficial review of the development of community education in one small rural State; however, we are convinced that our procedure and organizational structure were basically sound as indicated by these selected outcomes.

During the first half of the current academic year, (our fourth year of operation), 198 community schools were operating under the leadership of 136 trained community school directors/coordinators; in cooperation with 282 community agencies; and providing educational, recreational and cultural enrichment services to an average of 57,723 enrolled participants each week. One or more community schools were operating in each of Utah's 40 local school districts which served a total of 222,233 persons during the period July 1 through December 31, 1971.

Richard Pendall, publisher of the Community Education Journal, asked me recently to identify the successful ingredients of Utah's Community Education program, and my response was:

1. Commitment on the part of the State Board of Education and its professional staff sufficient to place the program high on the Agency's list of educational priorities.

2. Professionally trained leadership to rally support, to direct and coordinate programs;

3. The selfless involvement and cooperation of many dedicated persons and groups such as the Parents and Teachers Association, Council of Cities and Towns, Council on Aging, and City and County Recreation Departments; and

4. A comprehensive system of communications including the active support of the mass media. (A large majority of those who understand the community education concept will support it.)

It is the firm opinion of those of us who have been identified with community education in Utah that there is no reasonable alternative to State Education Agency involvement and leadership if the concept is to be successfully implemented on a State-wide basis. We view Community Education as a viable concept of Public Education -- administered and financed through the State and Local Boards of Education. We believe that Community Education should extend the services of public education - - not pre-empt them. Community Education is not a distinct, parallel, competing program of educational services; rather, it provides for improved coordination and utilization of all educational resources (both human and physical) within the community.

In a recent communication addressed to Bernell Larsen, State Superintendent of Public Instruction in Nevada, Utah State Superintendent Walter D. Talbot said in part:

" . . . In my opinion the Community School concept is the most viable program to be introduced into the public school system in the past two decades. This is primarily due to the fact that the program seeks to give life to the old concept that the schools belong to the people. Thus the Community Schools open their doors to people of all ages and engage them in meaningful activities which are built around the school as the center of a neighborhood or a community. Through this concept many of the social services needed by people in a community can be centered at the school building from which emanates a total educational program.

Utah has not developed its program to the degree that is needed to make the concept most meaningful. What needs to take place, in my opinion, is that the concept of the Community School needs to permeate the entire school program rather than be a separate program on the fringes. It needs to form the base from which all school programs emanate. It is my belief that this can be done with little or no additional money except for leadership."

Dr. T. H. Bell, formerly Utah State Superintendent of Public Instruction and Deputy U. S. Commissioner of Education, and currently Superintendent of Schools in Utah's largest consolidated school district stated recently that . . . "The commitment of State educational leaders to the concept of community education is perhaps the most important single ingredient to the success of the program. The emphasis on the universities has been a positive force in furthering community education and should be continued. But, I think, on a priority basis, the emphasis first needs to come in the state departments of education and second in the large city school systems. Then, coming along as a close third, it should generate university support and the training programs needed to provide the know-how for development and operation of the community school.

In a situation such as we have in Utah, in which the state department of education has designated a full-time coordinator to go to the individual school districts and provide and stimulate leadership for community education and with the commitment of the superintendents of schools, the program obviously will move foreward much more rapidly than if leadership were dependent upon university professors who have been trained in the operation of specialized departments to teach courses and give indirect leadership. One is a direct way and the other is and indirect way of promoting the community education movement. One way of doing it is through advice and persuasion and the other is down through the line and the official chain of command."

In conclusion I would like to report briefly on two very recent cooperative projects involving the Utah Congress of Parents and Teachers and our Utah State Education Agency.

(1) During the State P.T.A. Convention which was conducted in Salt Lake City on May 9 through 11, 1972, the delegates formally adopted a Resolution supporting the Community School Concept. After the appropriate number of "Whereases" describing the function and services of Community Education the document stated:

Now, Therefore Be It Resolved:

That the Utah Congress of Parents and Teachers utilize the Community School with its coordinated facilities and resources as the vehicle for implementing its programs of educational and community service;

That the Utah Association in cooperation with other interested organizations and agencies, conduct a series of regional conferences conceived to increase understanding of, and support for, the Community Education concept; and

Be It Further Resolved:

That the Utah Congress of Parents and Teachers encourage its individual members to identify personally with local Community Education activities through their participation in leadership training programs, membership in Community School advisory and action committees, and through volunteer service projects.

(2) The second joint project was the development of a Statement of "fundamental principles" based upon an in-depth appraisal of the proposed Federal Legislation for Community Education. The final two principles are particularly relevant to my assigned topic:

> Federal grants should be available through each of the State Education Agencies for the establishment of new community school programs and the expansion of existing ones. These grants should be utilized for the training and salaries of community school leaders and for other related program expenses. Federal funds should be allocated to local education agencies through their respective State Education Agencies on a program-approval basis, and in accordance with federal and state guidelines.
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> Community Education funds should be apportioned to State Education Agencies on an equitable basis but should not be restricted to the development of pilot and/or experimental projects inasmuch as the extent of program development varies considerably among the several states.

It is my sincere hope that through our joint efforts, and the cooperation of an increasing number of other agencies and organizations, the vital concept of Community Education will be implemented on a nationwide basis.